Strengthening agricultural research

*436. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have approved a Rs. 1200 crore project to strengthen agricultural research putting renewed emphasis on shoring up farm revenue;

(b) if so, whether this research project would also be re-oriented to the market-driven WTO regime, which our farmers are required to adopt gradually in a foreseeable future to improve their competitiveness in the international market; and

(c) whether any other agency, other than the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, would also be involved, so as to get better exposure for twin objective of food self-sufficiency and boosting income for a market-driven scenario?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) The Government has approved the National Agricultural Innovation Project for US$ 250 million (approximately Rs.1200 crore).

(b) The sub-projects particularly under research on production to consumption system component under National Agricultural Innovation Project would address market driven WTO regime.

(c) The sub-projects would operate in consortium mode involving diverse stakeholders, from public and private sectors.

Over utilisation of railway tracks

*437. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that over utilisation of railway tracks to the extent of 125 percent would go against railway safety;

(b) whether it is also a fact that rejected wagons and coaches are re-used without clearance from the N.C.W.;

(c) whether this kind of rejected wagons and coaches are used almost to the 80 to 90 percent in the Southern Railway;

(d) what are the measures to avoid this situation; and

(e) whether it is fact that human failure is the highest among the causes of railway accidents and if so, what are the special measures undertaken to curb this kind of failures?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) No, Sir. Over utilisation of sectional capacity in some case may lead to some what slowing down of speed of train and consequent increase in journey time. All measures are taken to ensure that high capacity utilization of railway tracks does not compromise Railway safety.

(b) Yes, Sir. Sometimes, coaches and wagons rejected by Train Examiners of Neutral Control Organisation on account of not carrying out certain modification, leaving minor deficiencies in scale of passenger amenities which do not affect safety, are permitted to be deployed for service. Such permission in given judiciously, so as not to detain rolling stock after overhaul in workshops, in the interest of overall availability of coaches and wagons for public use.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) Yes, Sir. Human failure is the highest amongst causes of Railway accidents percentage wise. But the accidents because of human failure involving Railway staff are gradually coming down from 293 accidents in 2000-01 to 126* accidents in 2005-06. Percentage wise also, the accidents on account of human failure are steadily coming down from 61.94% to 53.85%* during the same period. However, for reducing accidents on account of human failure, apart from introduction of various technological aids to bring down dependence on human element of the railway staff, measures like timely replacement of over aged assets, adoption of suitable technologies for their upgradation and maintenance, qualitative improvement in recruitment rules and procedures, initial and also in service training, safety drives and inspections to monitor and educate staff for observance of safe practices are undertaken on continuing basis.

In addition social awareness programmes such as publicity through print and electronic media, distribution of posters, pamphlets, involvement of village panchayats and Nukkad Natak etc. are regularly undertaken to educate Public for taking necessary care and precautions so as not to endanger their lives while negotiating level crossings.

* Figures are provisional.